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16
ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 UPW-01 IO-11 AID-20 OPR-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-06 H-02 INR-06 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 RSR-01 /108 W

R 190557Z SEP 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0115
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

065271
DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY Joan Izuel DATE 1/26/82

FDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE _____
TS AUTH. _____ REASON(S) _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☒
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS _____

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 15022

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (R E F E R E N C E A • 14681 VICE 14631)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: CONTINUED EXPRESSIONS OF OPPOSITION TO THE UNCONTESTED
ELECTION

REF: A. SAIGON 14681
B. SAIGON 15013
C. SAIGON 15007

1. SUMMARY: IN THE LAST FEW DAYS VARIOUS CATHOLIC ELEMENTS
HAVE CONFIRMED THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE PRESIDENT'S INTENTION TO
PROCEED WITH AN UNCONTESTED ELECTION, THE LOWER HOUSE OPPOSITION
SOCIETY BLOC HAS ISSUED A MANIFESTO CONDEMNING THIEU, AND THE
UPPER HOUSE WILL MEET TO DEBATE THE ELECTION ON SEPTEMBER 21.
HOWEVER, WE DO NOT SEE ANY BASIC CHANGE IN THE ELECTION SITUATION (REF A). END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE SUBMISSION OF OUR LAST ASSESSMENT OF THE ELECTION

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OUTLOOK (REF A) THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL ADDITIONAL MANIFESTATIONS OF OPPOSITION TO PRESIDENT THIEU'S PLAN TO RUN IN AN UNCONTESTED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ON OCTOBER 3. MOST NOTABLE, ALBEIT MODERATE, WAS THE STATEMENT ISSUED BY AN QUANG ON SEPTEMBER 16 WHICH IS REPORTED SEPARATELY (REF C). ALSO OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST HAVE BEEN SIGNS OF DISTRESS AND FERMENT IN THE NORMALLY PRO-THIEU CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND STIRRINGS AMONG MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THESE ARE BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED BELOW.

3. SO FAR WE DO NOT SEE IN THESE PROTESTS ANY SIGNS OF A SIGNIFICANT COALESCENCE ON A SPECIFIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE UNCONTESTED REFERENDUM. EVEN THE VARIOUS RELEASES BEING DISCUSSED BY MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY--WHICH OFFICIALLY IS THE BODY THAT COULD LEGALLY PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE--DO NOT SHOW MUCH LIFE OR SUBSTANCE. MUCH LESS DO WE SEE ANY IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THIEU'S POSITION. WE NOTE FOR EXAMPLE THAT THE PROGRESSIVE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT HAS NOT ENTERED THE LISTS AGAINST THIEU AND THE PNJ'S USUALLY PERCEPTIVE PROFESSOR BONG EXPRESSES THE BELIEF THAT "THINGS WILL SHAKE DOWN" AS PEOPLE ADJUST TO THE IDEA OF A REFERENDUM. NEVERTHELESS, THE CONFIRMATIONS OF DISAFFECTION, IN PARTICULAR AMONG THE CATHOLICS WHOSE SUPPORT TO DATE HAS REPRESENTED AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL ASSET TO THIEU, CANNOT BE VIEWED WITH EQUANIMITY BY INDEPENDENCE PALACE AND THEY CLEARLY CALL FOR SOME FENCE MENDING.

4. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: ON SEPTEMBER 13 THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUALS MOVEMENT (PAX ROMANA) RELEASED AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT CALLING ON PRESIDENT THIEU AND VICE PRESIDENT KY TO RECONCILE THEIR DIFFERENCES. THE STATEMENT CRITICIZED THE SCHEDULED UNCONTESTED ELECTION AS "LACKING IN DEMOCRACY AND POPULAR ENTHUSIASM" AND NOTED THAT "THE PEOPLE HAVE ALMOST LOST CONFIDENCE" IN THIEU'S LEADERSHIP. THE STATEMENT ALSO URGED "THE PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND SUPREME COURT TO SEEK A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT IMPASSE IN ORDER TO PREVENT A COLLAPSE OF THE NATION WITH UNFORESEEABLE CONSEQUENCE." PAX ROMANA IN VIET-NAM IS THE USUAL ORTHODOX, GENERALLY CONSERVATIVE GROUP OF CATHOLIC PROFESSIONALS (HERE IT INCLUDES SUCH NOTABLES AS SENATE CHAIRMAN HUYEN AND PRO-THIEU SENATOR PAULINE THO). THE COMMUNIQUE INDICATES THAT CATHOLIC DISENCHANTMENT WITH THIEU IS RUNNING DEEP.

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5. ON SEPTEMBER 14 A GROUP OF ABOUT 200 GENERALLY LEFTIST CATHOLIC INTELLECTUALS DEMONSTRATED IN FRONT OF SAIGON ARCHBISHOP BINH'S RESIDENCE TO DEMAND THAT THE VIET-NAM BISHOP'S COUNCIL WITHDRAW INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED JULY 30 CALLING FOR A HEAVY CATHOLIC VOTE IN THE FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. A NUMBER OF THE DEMONSTRATORS--WHICH NOTABLY INCLUDED TWO LEADERS OF THE USUALLY HAWKISH, CONSERVATIVE NORTHERN CATHOLIC GREATER SOLIDARITY FORCE--BURNED VOTING CARDS AND DEFACED CAMPAIGN POSTERS OF THE THIEU-HUONG SLATE. THE DEMONSTRATION WAS ORGANIZED BY THE MILITANT BUT SMALL CATHOLIC MOVEMENT FOR BUILDING PEACE, WHICH ALSO ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE STRONGLY CRITICIZING THE OCTOBER REFERENDUM, THE THIEU REGIME AND THE US.

6. THE NEXT DAY THE USUALLY INACTIVE COUNCIL OF RELIGIONS RELEASED A FORMAL COMMUNIQUE SIGNED BY SAIGON'S AUXILIARY CATHOLIC BISHOP TRAN THANH KHAM, ADVISING THE AUTHORITIES THAT "THEY MUST BE AWARE OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS HISTORIC AND EXTREMELY SERIOUS PHASE IN ORDER TO AVOID DAMAGING SUNKER

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SECTION EA-14

TO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06 L-03 NSAE-00

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AID-24 OPR-02 (RSR-01 /108 W

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1 120572 SEP 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO REGSTATE WASHDC 0116
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
AMEMB FRANCE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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CONSEQUENCES FOR THE NATION." THE COMMUNIQUE URGED THAT THE
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION MUST BE HELD IN ACCORD WITH REASON AND
JUSTICE SO THAT THE NATION'S LEADERS WILL HAVE SUFFICIENT
PRESTIGE TO RESOLVE INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES AND ACHIEVE VICTORY
IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE ON THE INTERNATIONAL PLANE." THE STATE-
MENT IS SO FAR THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE EXPRESSION BY A HIGH-
RANKING CATHOLIC OFFICIAL AND INDICATES THAT THE CHURCH HIERARCHY
WILL BE SLOWLY AND CAUTIOUSLY RESPONDING TO HEAVY CRITICISM
OF THE UNCONTESTED ELECTION AMONG THE CATHOLIC FAITHFUL.

ON THE SAME DAY SENATOR TRUONG TIEN DAT, PROMINENT NORTHERN
CATHOLIC LAWYER, GREATER SOLIDARITY FORCE VICE CHAIRMAN AND
MEMBER OF THE PRO-ADMINISTRATION GROUP IN THE SENATE, CRITICIZED
THE FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION TO LOCAL REPORTERS AND
PREDICTED THAT CATHOLICS WOULD ORGANIZE MASSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS
AGAINST THE REGIME. DAT ADDED THAT CATHOLIC OPPOSITION WOULD
COORDINATE ITS ACTIVITIES WITH STUDENTS, DISABLED VETERANS
AND POLITICAL PARTIES, AND BLAMED THE PRESENT SITUATION ON THE
UNITED STATES.

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8. THE OPPOSITION SOCIETY (LOC IN THE LOWER HOUSE ORGANIZED A MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 13 TO DISCUSS THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION. ALONG WITH OPPOSITION DEPUTIES SUCH AS NGO CONG DUC, LY QUY CHUNG, AND HO HUU TUONG, THE MEETING WAS ALSO ATTENDED BY SUCH NORMALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT FIGURES AS LE TRONG QUAT OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLES RECONSTRUCTION FORCE, VU QUOC THONG OF THE BUDDHIST SOCIAL FORCE, AND HOANG THAI NINH OF THE GREATER SOLIDARITY FORCE. KY REPRESENTATIVES WERE ALSO THERE. THE GROUP APPROVED A MANIFESTO WHICH TERMED THE ONE-MAN RACE UNCONSTITUTIONAL, ILLEGAL, DANGEROUS FOR THE NATION AND A SHAME FOR THE PEOPLE. THE DOCUMENT CALLED ON THIEU TO RENOUNCE HIS INTENTION OF RUNNING ALONE SO THAT A NEW ELECTION COULD BE ORGANIZED AND CALLED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS TO OPPOSE A ONE-MAN ELECTION. IF THIEU PERSISTED IN HIS INTENTION, THEY WOULD USE "ALL MEANS" TO OPPOSE THE OCTOBER 3 ELECTION. THEY FURTHER "CONDEMNED BEFORE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN OPINION THE PLOT OF FOREIGNERS TO INFRINGE ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF VN AND TO TRAMPLE ON THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE BY ESTABLISHING A DICTATORSHIP IN SVN THROUGH THE ORGANIZATION OF THE OCTOBER 3 ELECTION."

9. SEVERAL OF THESE OPPOSITIONIST DEPUTIES ALONG WITH OTHER ANTI-THIEU NOTABLES SOME DAYS LATER STAGED A PUBLIC PROTEST IN FRONT OF THE LOWER HOUSE AND PROVOKED THE POLICE INTO UNSEEMLY OVER-REACTION ON SEPTEMBER 18 (REF B).

10. THE UPPER HOUSE WILL HOLD A PLENARY DEBATE ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ON SEPTEMBER 21. ACCORDING TO SENATOR HUYNH VAN CAO, SEVERAL RESOLUTIONS MAY BE OFFERED, INCLUDING ONE CALLING FOR THIEU TO STEP DOWN AND LET THE SENATE CHAIRMAN ORGANIZE A NEW ELECTION, AND A Milder ONE BY SENATORS DONG VAN SUNG AND TRAN THE MINH ACCEPTING THE OCTOBER 3 ELECTION BUT URGING THE PRESIDENT TO TAKE SOME FORM OF SUBSEQUENT ACTION TO AVERT A NATIONAL CRISIS.
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